



Out in the spotlight, oblivious to all around, in a long white dress and with shoulder-length hair she chants quietly to the soft flow of the music. Then, in an instant she has changed into a traditional Chinese bib with a bright red border and wide shorts; her dance is powerful yet smooth. Suddenly, as I watch the luminous dancer move across the stage, Yeat's question comes to mind.

For such a spirited young woman no name could be more appropriate than the one she has, "Ziu", meaning freely and with facility.

I met Philein Wang (her Chinese name is Ziu) in a café on a bright afternoon. She was wearing a baseball cap, a white T-shirt and blue jeans. She is casual and unfussy. As she sipped her tonic, she explained the story behind her English name. Her literature-loving mother named her three daughters in the style of classic Greek legends: her elder sister is Mona, meaning "the first"; her younger sister is Areta, meaning "excellence". "My name Philein means universal love."

It's hard to imagine that this attractive and confident young Chinese American woman spent much of her childhood troubled by feelings of inferiority. "I was born in Michigan and raised in California. Back then you never saw a Chinese face on the cover of a magazine. After all, we are only three percent of the population. I grew up feeling like the ugly duckling. Because I was not blond no one would find me attractive. I was so used to being ignored." Growing up as part of an ethnic minority she felt

perplexed and, at times, lost. "Dance was my haven," she recalled, "It has been one of the only places I found where I could run and be free, where my race isn't really an issue. All dancers look the same on stage."

Unlike some of her overseas Chinese peers, Philein always felt certain about her Chinese identity. Her parents—mother from Hubei and father from Taiwan—came to America to study in the 1970s, and they brought their children up to love their ancestral home. Philein had a strict upbringing: the three sisters studied Chinese characters everyday and their mother made sure to bring her daughters up with a sense of pride in Chinese culture. "Even at the dinner table she'd say, 'Look at how smart we Chinese are, little Ru, we invented chopsticks!'" Many summers the family would go to Taiwan or mainland China to visit their relatives, which left Philein with countless fond memories of the welcoming warmth she found there. In 1989 she came to study at the Beijing Ballet Academy and privately with Zhong Ren Liang. After she graduated from college she began studying martial arts under Beijing Wushu Team's former champion Patti Hao Li. "I learned all about the strength of women from these extraordinary masters and they made me see how the Chinese body moves in its unique way."

In one of her trips to Asia, Philein was upset to see so many Asian youngsters trying to copy the fashionable Hip-hop dance they saw on MTV. "All these kids are imitating African-Americans and pretending to be a part of their culture. I thought to myself: someone needs to invent a dance style for the young people in Asia to show the world who they are." Coming back to America, Philein went to study with renowned choreographer Rennie Harris in order to learn about the spirit of Hip-hop. Something this pioneering master said to Philein opened a new understanding for her, "The philosophy behind Hip-hop is that it is a way for people to relate and work out their difficulties without actually punching each other." This came as a revelation to Philein: the realization that it was a distillation of generations of African American street life. "Hip-hop moves carry all the connotations of street fighting and boxing." As she demonstrated the moves to me, Philein explained, "Why are these Hip-hop dancers walking like that? Because their fathers and grandfathers walked in the streets in exactly the same way."

So what style of dancing would best represent the Chinese soul? What sort of movement suits the Asian physique and

would have an essence accessible to Chinese people around the world? After a year and a half of contemplation and experiment Philein came up with an answer. Pretty much every Chinese child could spontaneously pull off a few Kungfu kicks while playing. Could this be the key to inspiring a physical memory deeply imbedded in our bodies? This lead Philein to attempt a combination of Tiger Claw (Shaolin Style) and Hip-hop moves, with a dash of Tai Chi, Yoga and modern dance thrown in for good measure. She calls this Tiger Hip-Hop™. Watching Philein as she dances, one can't help but be impressed by the exciting rhythm of modern Hip-hop infused with the melancholic elegance of Tai Chi and martial art. Strength and tenderness feed off each other to form the unique energy of this original dance. Philein has taught Tiger Hip-Hop™ in Los Angeles and New York, but only a few students really grasped the essence of it. "Believe it or not, the best Tiger Hip-Hop™ dancers I found are the ones here. They have an instant, natural grasp of this dance." Such discovery convinced Philein that the Tiger Hip-Hop™ she invented has genuine roots in Chinese culture.

The performances in Beijing finished, Philein is busy preparing for her upcoming shows in San Francisco, then Edinburgh and Cape Town, hoping to bring her Tiger Hip-Hop™ to still more Chinese audiences around the world, and to anyone who's searching for a spiritual home through art. Being able to do something like this and having a homeland that she can always come back to has made Philein truly grateful. "I'm really fortunate," she says sincerely, knowing not many others have such good luck. Many third and fourth-generation Chinese can't speak the language, have lost touch with their old homes and have no relatives to return to. "When a young Chinese person is feeling confused as I was, and looking for answers to 'who am I', maybe Tiger Hip-Hop™ can provide a link. In some cases, it may be the only link. Maybe through this dance, that person would be able to find his identity, his culture and his strength. He would know where he belongs."

Seeing this determined young woman working steadily to achieve her dream, I began to understand where her radiant aura comes from. When someone has set her heart so firmly to create something unique to give to the world, she stands out naturally from the crowd. Although, Philein tells me with a sweet, unassuming smile, the most important thing for her is to simply let her future kids know, "we came back. We found a way back home."



自如所创造的Tiger Hip-Hop™是一种极富动感的新式舞蹈，它融虎拳、太极、瑜伽、现代舞和Hip-Hop为一体，浸润着亚洲文化传统精神